OPERATION BOATSMART

Newsletter

Number 15 **June 2003**

"You're In Command, Boat Safely": The Genesis of a Campaign

By John Malatak, Coast Guard Office of Boating Safety

Recreational boating fatalities continue to decline, but there are still far too many deaths, injuries, and accidents involving recreational boaters on our nation's waterways. An average of 700 recreational boaters die each year, and the great majority of them could easily have been prevented. Furthermore, while recreational boating deaths are less than half what they were three decades ago, the number of accidents and serious injuries has climbed unabated. Responding to totally preventable recreational boating accidents consumes valuable resources of federal, state, and local maritime law enforcement, resources that could otherwise be focused on homeland security efforts on the water.

For some time it has been a goal of the Coast Guard's Office of Boating Safety (G-OPB) to unify its programs and funding relating to boating safety marketing and education under one multi-year outreach effort. The National Recreational Boating Safety Outreach Program officially began with the awarding of a task order to PCI Communications, Inc., an Alexandria, Virginia-based communications agency.

Marketing research began in September 2002 and concluded two months later with a report to the Office of Boating Safety, and to Auxiliary and Power Squadrons representatives. Among the key findings that will help to guide the outreach effort:

Most boaters think they are "safe" already. They equate "safety" with equipment – life jackets, fire extinguishers, and radios – and "danger" with the behavior of "other boaters." Therefore, telling them to boat "safe" or "smart" is not enough; they must be encouraged to boat "safer," or "at a new level of safety." (Remember the "drive ***(see next column)***

"You're in Command" (Cont'd)

defensively" campaign that suggests you drive as if the "other guy" will do something stupid any minute? Same concept.)

- Recreational boating safety is suffering from "concept clutter." So much information comes from so many different purveyors that little is being retained.
- The Vessel Safety Check program is known and well regarded, but few boaters know how to find a Vessel Examiner when they need a check.
- Boaters liked the idea of America's Boating Course (ABC), but many Auxiliary and Power Squadrons members question if it may hinder their own classroom training and recruiting efforts.
- Though they are concerned about inebriated boaters, few boaters consider their own drinking to be a problem -- and fewer still understand the effect of waterborne "stressors."
- Boaters may be motivated more by pocketbook issues than fear of accidents – discounts on insurance premiums for taking safety measures or stiffer fines and penalties for violations provide the greatest leverage for behavior change.

On the basis of this research, a strategy to unite the many messages of the National Recreational Boating Safety Outreach program was developed. The goal was to "brand" boating safety – to create a nationwide identification for the idea of boating *safer* – and thus break through the oversupply of boating safety information. The campaign would serve as an umbrella to bring together the disparate messages of recreational boating safety.

The team searched for a word theme that would serve the goals of the umbrella campaign. After considering dozens of alternatives, the Office of Boating Safety selected: "YOU'RE IN COMMAND: BOAT SAFELY." A logo graphically ***(see next page)***

"You're in Command" (Cont'd)

depicting the campaign was also approved in early January. The campaign will be consistently identified as: "Brought to you by the U.S. Coast Guard.

The word theme and accompanying logo, which depicts a ship's wheel and bow breaking through waves, have tested well, according to the researchers. Boaters immediately understood the message – that as captain they bear the responsibility for their behavior on the water. The graphic image places viewers at the helm, accountable for their own safety and the safety of passengers and other boaters. The theme easily accommodates the various sub themes of the campaign – as in, "You're In Command: Get a Vessel Safety Check," or "You're In Command: Take the ABC Course," etc.

The National Recreational Boating Safety Outreach Program will focus on making recreational boaters safer while enjoying their time spent on the water. Our outreach efforts will focus on the Four Principles of Safe Boating in Operation BoatSmart: the importance of wearing life jackets (not just keeping them handy), boater education (specifically the ABC course), safe boats (specifically the VSC program and dangers of carbon monoxide exposure), and sober boating.

The Office of Boating Safety first developed materials to better market the VSC program and the ABC course, two joint efforts by the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary and the U.S. Power Squadrons. We are beginning to work on materials that target anglers and hunters, two boater populations that together constitute about a third of all boating deaths. The main theme there, of course, will be the importance of wearing a life jacket, since that is by far the biggest factor in these deaths.

The Office of Boating Safety has also developed a section on the www.uscgboating.org website entitled the "You're In Command Resource Center." Here boating safety advocates can find an ever-expanding variety of tools, resources, images, and downloadable files to help promote "You're In Command," VSC, ABC, BUI awareness, life jacket wear, etc. We are also making great strides toward promoting the program through media relations and coalitions with manufacturers, dealers, other boating, hunting, angling, and outdoors interest groups, and associated industries. You can expect to see articles, ***(see next column)***

"You're in Command" (Cont'd)

PSAs, and features branded with "You're In Command" – first in Auxiliary, Power Squadrons, and NASBLA publications, then later in the trade and general press.

"You're in Command" should be viewed as an external marketing tool for any and all OBS partners to use as is deemed relevant to their particular situation vis-à-vis the identified high-risk or "target" boaters in their region and the underlying factors (lack of PFD wear, lack of boater education, alcohol use, etc.) needing attention. "You're in Command" helps unify the Four Principles, bringing resources and marketing assistance to take these messages more effectively to the boating public.

"You're In Command" – and the National Recreational Boating Safety Outreach program itself – will depend heavily upon the partnership and support of the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary and United States Power Squadrons. The two groups represent a huge network of dedicated and enthusiastic boating safety proponents who will now have access to some of the tools, resources, and national publicity they have long needed.

The Office of Boating Safety looks forward to working with the Auxiliary, Power Squadrons, NASBLA, the National Water Safety Congress, NSBC, and others throughout the "You're In Command" campaign. The energy, effort, and connections of the nation's two premier volunteer boating safety organizations, coupled with a world class communications agency such as PCI Communications, will be invaluable in the our effort to change the behavior of recreational boaters, reduce accidents, and save lives on the nation's waterways.

For more information on the "You're in Command" campaign, click on the icon below, or go to: www.uscgboating.org.

15 Reasons a Vessel Might Not Pass a VSC

Adapted from the national VSC website at:
www.safetyseal.net
By Joseph L. Barcelo, Dept. Chief - V, USCGAUX
Luis Ojeda, Nat'l VSC Program Coordinator, USPS

A Vessel Safety Check (VSC) is a courtesy examination of a recreational boat to verify the presence and condition of certain safety equipment required by state and federal regulations. The Vessel Examiner (VE) who conducts the VSC is a trained specialist and is a member of the United States Power Squadrons or the US Coast Guard Auxiliary, or has been trained by these organizations to properly examine all types of recreational boats, from jonboat to yacht.

The VE is also trained to make recommendations and discuss certain safety issues with the boater during the exam. The value of the VSC goes far beyond ensuring a boat meets minimal standards on a given day. For many boaters, this may be the only boater education they will ever receive.

A VSC, including those conducted by law enforcement personnel in certain states, is not a boarding, and no citations can be given as a result of the exam. Once the exam is over, the VE will supply the boater with a copy of the evaluation so that he or she may act on the suggestions given.

Though the exam itself is quite rigorous, three-quarters of all boats that undergo a VSC pass the exam. (In many cases, a missing or unusable item can be replaced or corrected right at the marina.) Vessels that pass all of the required items are given a distinctive VSC decal to display. "Required" items are those specifically regulated by federal, state, and/or local regulations for that particular size and type of vessel. The decal does not exempt boaters from law enforcement boardings, (this is especially true after the events of 9-11), but the decal ensures that such encounters will most likely be positive ones.

Since VSC month continues through June, we thought we'd take a look at the items most likely to cause a boat to "fail" a VSC. The following represents a sampling of 100,650 VSCs. The numbers are a percentage of ALL vessels examined, not just those that failed the VSC. (Some had more than one discrepancy.) The numbers, ***(See next column)***

15 Reasons (cont'd)

therefore, will not add up to 100%.

Items that Failed:

1. Visual Distress Signals (12.221%)
2. State and/or local Regulations (10.432%)
4. Navigation Lights (8.465%)
   Registration/Documentation (5.574%)
5. Display of Numbers (5.435%)
6. Sound Producing Devices/Bell (5.156%)
7. Overall Vessel Condition (4.670%)
8. Fire Extinguishers (4.501%)
9. Marine Sanitation Device (2.921%)
10. Navigation Rules (2.742%)
11. Personal Flotation Devices (2.832%)
12. MARPOL Placard (2.802%)
13. Pollution Placard (2.375%)
14. Backfire Flame Control (1.639%)
15. Ventilation (1.451%)

Recommended Items Not Found (Note: These items are not required to pass the VSC.)

1. Marine Radio (33.433%)
2. Capacity/Certificate of Compliance (28.246%)
3. First Aid and PIW Kits (27.928%)
4. Inland Visual Distress signals (24.252%)
5. Mounted Fire Extinguishers (21.570%)
6. Dewatering Device and Backup (14.347%)
7. Anchor and Line for Area (11.257%)

Now that you know what makes some boats fail, how does your vessel rate? For more information or to find a VSC examiner near you, go to: www.safetyseal.net.

Hey, VEs, don't forget! Post your VSC dates & locations online at NSBC's campaign website:
www.safeboatingcampaign.org
It's easy, it's fast, and it's instant advertising!

NWSC Journal Now Available

The latest National Water Safety Congress Journal (June 2003) has just been published. It includes information on this year's Summit, and a very nice article on some of the more recent projects that NWSC has supported with grants. Check out this latest issue online at: **www.watersafetycongress.org**. While you're there, find out how easy it is to charter a water safety council in your area!

Va. Boats Get Temporary Decals

As a result of state budget reductions for two years in a row, the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) has had to lay off workers, resulting in a backlog for boat registrations that will soon reach sixty days or more in getting processed.

As a result, the Virginia DGIF has begun issuing temporary registration decals. The temporary decals are green in color, have the wording "Temporary Registration Decal" on them, and are accompanied by a letter of explanation and authorization that the boater will be instructed to carry onboard with them while the boat is being operated.

All temporary decals will expire on December 31, 2003. Law enforcement personnel and Vessel Examiners are asked to honor the temporary decals with the caveats noted above for this year's boating season.

Tennessee Passes Mandatory Boater Education

Governor Phil Bredesen, Tennessee, just signed into law a bill that requires persons born after 1 January 1989 must successfully complete a NASBLA approved course accepted by the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) in order to operate a boat in Tennessee. (The law applies to persons 14½ years and younger right now for those of you who are math-challenged!) The new law will go into effect on 1 January 2005. Congratulations to Ed Carter, BLA for Tennessee and all those who supported this legislation!

NABA Notes

NSBC Chair Bill Griswold shares the following notes he took during the Northern Area Boating Administrators annual meeting in Bar Harbor, ME, this June.

NOTES NABA
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Remember, the annual NASBLA conference will be held 20-24 September in Virginia Beach, VA. Make your plans now to attend!

New HLS Outreach Materials Now Available

The latest homeland security brochures have been distributed to OBS partners across the country. A little over two million of the colorful, information-packed trifold brochures were printed. Contrary to an article in last month's newsletter, CG Groups, Marine Safety Offices (MSOs), and Vessel Traffic Service commands (VTSs) received their own supplies of the brochures. Supplies were also shipped to the National Safe Boating Council, and to USPS, CG Auxiliary, and Army Corps of Engineers warehouses. State BLAs who requested direct shipment of the brochures received their shipments as well.

The brochure provides recreational boaters in both inland and coastal areas with pertinent information on security issues to keep in mind while out on the water.

The brochure warns boaters about the Naval Vessel Protection Zone (NVPZ) and the need to stay clear of other commercial traffic on the water. It warns against anchoring in ship channels and underneath bridges, or venturing into restricted areas around dams and nuclear power plants. It contains information on how to report suspicious activities to the proper authorities. And it explains how every boater can help first responders focus more resources on homeland security by taking a few simple steps to boat more safely this year. (Wouldn't you know those simple steps include: wear your life jacket, take a boating safety course, get a VSC, and boat sober!)

To request brochures from NSBC, go to their website: www.safeboatingcampaign.org, or email: office@safeboatingcouncil.org with your request. You may order up to 1,200 of these brochures at a time from NSBC. Contact your organization's warehouse for specific requirements or restrictions if you wish to order direct from them.

Spanish versions of the brochures are also available. You may order those directly from our office. Contact CDR Kim Pickens at 757-398-6568 or kpickens@lantd5.uscg.mil. In addition, a small number of very large (2X4-feet) red plastic warning posters with the NVPZ graphic may be ordered through this office. We request these be ordered only for those locales where U.S. military vessels are homeported, in shipyards, or in ports of call.

Suddenly in Command

By Ray McAllister, FSO-PA, 3-6
United States Coast Guard Auxiliary

Some years ago, the Coast Guard published a small booklet called "Suddenly in Command." This handy little publication contained a few common sense rules and some brief instructions on how to start the boat, shift it, steer it and stop it. It also instructed you in how to pick up a person in the water, as well as how to call or signal for help.

I read it a couple of years ago, and did not think much more about it until, one day when I was diving just north of Baker's Haulover Pier, in Florida. An incident happened there that instantly brought that booklet to mind.

While on my boat with my hand-held VHF radio on, I heard a woman crying for help. She kept the transmit button depressed while she kept repeating, "Help me! My husband has had a heart attack and I don't know how to run the boat. Help me!"

She never let up on the mike button, so I couldn't respond to get her location. And I knew she had to be close! My VHF radio was only 100 milliwatts, and at the best of times will only carry a signal for only a mile or two over water.

I scanned the horizon for a boat in trouble and could see nothing. Finally I gave up and continued on my course. About an hour later, I headed for Baker's Haulover Inlet and saw a commotion on the beach just north of Haulover Pier.

A boat was grounded there and an ambulance had come to the area with lights flashing. As I came in, I could see them carrying a man on a stretcher. I asked a marine patrolman what had happened, and he told me the man had had a heart attack and the boat, containing the victim and his wife, had drifted onto the beach. The man in the boat had died.

The man's wife was the lady on the radio! I hope no one told her that she might have saved him had she only known how to use a marine radio and how to run the boat if she was "suddenly in command." Too often only one person knows how to start and run the boat. If that person is incapacitated or falls ***(see next column)***

Suddenly in Command (cont'd)

overboard disaster is sure to follow.

I've heard about similar incidents since then. The lesson to learn here is: ALWAYS BE SURE SOMEONE ON YOUR VESSEL CAN OPERATE THE BOAT IF YOU ARE INCAPACITATED!

If nothing else, before you start out, make sure everyone onboard knows how the radio works! Let your passengers know that if they can't raise the Coast Guard, they should try to raise anyone else on VHF channel 16. Show them how to turn the radio on (power it up), how to transmit, and to remember that they need to release the microphone button so the Coast Guard or other vessels can communicate with them. Make sure they understand and can locate the type of information that the Coast Guard will request: What is your location? What is the emergency? What type of boat are you in or how can they identify the boat? How many adults and children are onboard?

So sad how one little thing can make all the difference. If the woman I heard that day had just released the microphone button, help might have reached her husband in time to save his life.

Below is a handout on emergency radio procedures. For more information, see the article, "This Mayday Doesn't Come with a Parade," in Commander's Bob's Notebook: http://www.commanderbob.com/. You can also check out the section on proper radio procedures found on Nautical Know How's website at: http://www.boatsafe.com/nauticalknowhow/radio.htm#emergency, or go to: www.uscgboating.org, and click "Marine Radio Lifeline" under "Met Life Safety Tips."

Emergency Radio Procedures.doc...

Editor's Note: As a former SAR (Search and Rescue) Controller, I, too, encountered such incidents with heartbreaking regularity. Here's my most vivid case: We once had to send rescuers to a woman and her small son on the high seas near Bermuda. Her husband had apparently fallen overboard during the night. The sobbing woman could not give her location, had no idea how to handle the family's sailboat, which was by this time tossing wildly in the sea, and she was naturally distraught over the loss of her husband. It had taken her most of an hour just to collect herself and figure out how to work the radio! Can you imagine???

Three National Parks Reopen to Personal Watercraft

By Elinore Boeke, Personal Watercraft Industry Association

One year after the National Park Service (NPS) was required by a court settlement to begin prohibiting personal watercraft (PWCs), one national seashore and two national recreation areas have reopened their gates in time for the peak summer boating months.

Lake Mead National Recreation Area (AZ/NV), Lake Powell in the Glen Canyon National Recreation Area (AZ/UT), and Assateague Island National Seashore (MD/VA) have recently announced that PWC enthusiasts are now allowed to operate in these areas. Scientific analyses of the effects of personal watercraft are currently underway in thirteen other National Park Service units.

Often referred to by trade names including JET SKI, WaveRunner and Sea-Doo, PWCs were banned from most National Recreation Areas and Seashores last year as a result of a 2000 lawsuit between an anti-boating group and the NPS. Each area that seeks to reopen to PWCs must now complete a scientific study of PWC impact on the local environment and prepare a rule.

Lake Mead and Assateague Island have both completed this process and determined that PWCs have no unique impact on their waterways. In fact, in every instance where a scientific assessment has measured the impact of PWCs on a public body of water where motorized boating is otherwise permitted, modern PWCs have been found to be appropriately included in multiple-use waterways management plans.

At Lake Powell, a recent lawsuit resulted in a settlement that allows PWC use during the 2003 boating season, while the rulemaking completes its final stages. Lake Powell's preferred alternative indicates that PWCs will likely be permanently allowed, with reasonable restrictions.

Modern PWCs comply with federal and state emissions requirements, and many models are ahead of schedule, meeting the EPA's 2006 standards. As a result of an industry-wide commitment to update engine technology since 1998, manufacturers have been producing PWCs that are ***(see next column***

National Parks Reopen to PWCs (Cont'd)

75 percent cleaner and 70 percent quieter than previous models.

Twenty million Americans operate PWCs each year, according to a government survey. U.S. Coast Guard statistics show that 99% of PWCs are operated accident-free.

The following list details other national recreation areas, seashores, and lakeshores and their stage in the PWC review process. The National Park Service welcomes comments from the public.

Amistad National Recreation Area (TX): Environmental Assessment (EA) in progress, www.nps.gov/amis
Assateague Island National Seashore (MD/VA): Open to PWCs as of 1 June 2003, www.nps.gov/asis
Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area (MT/WY): EA in progress, www.nps.gov/bica
Big Thicket National Preserve (TX): EA in progress, www.nps.gov/bith
Cape Lookout National Seashore (NC): EA in progress, www.nps.gov/calo
Chickasaw National Recreation Area (OK): EA in progress, www.nps.gov/chic
Curecanti National Recreation Area (CO): EA in progress, www.nps.gov/cure
Fire Island National Seashore (NY): EA in progress, www.nps.gov/fiis
Gateway National Recreation Area (NJ/NY): EA in progress, www.nps.gov/gate
Glen Canyon National Recreation Area (AZ/UT): Open to PWCs as of 1 May 2003, www.nps.gov/glca
Gulf Islands National Seashore (FL/MS): EA in progress, www.nps.gov/guis
Lake Mead National Recreation Area (AZ/NV): Open to PWCs as of 9 April 2003, www.nps.gov/lame
Lake Meredith National Recreation Area (TX): EA in progress, www.nps.gov/lamr
Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area (WA): EA in progress, www.nps.gov/laro
Padre Island National Seashore (TX): EA in progress, www.nps.gov/pais
Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore (MI): EA in progress, www.nps.gov/piro

VADM Terry Cross Discusses Importance of Wearing Life Jackets

Below is an Opinion/Editorial column by VADM Cross as published in the 18 June San Jose *Mercury News*. It was also published in the Portland *Oregonian*.

"THE loss of 11 lives when the chartered fishing vessel Taki Tooo capsized off Tillamook Bay, Ore., on Saturday was a tragic event. Unfortunately, the fact that none of those who perished was wearing a life jacket was a familiar theme for U.S. Coast Guard personnel engaged in that rescue. Time after time Coast Guard rescuers respond to boating accidents to find survivors wearing life jackets and victims without life jackets.

"Every Coast Guardsman who boards a small boat wears a life jacket for one simple reason – life jackets save lives. Boaters' excuses for not wearing their life jackets range from working on a suntan, to a mistaken belief that they are strong enough swimmers to overcome the forces of nature, to an impression that life jackets don't look cool. But suntans, swimming pool stamina and fashion statements don't count for much when you wind up in the cold Pacific Ocean, a rushing river or a wide lake in the aftermath of a capsizing or other boating accident.

"Some boaters even believe that they will have plenty of time to grab a life jacket if disaster strikes. The truth is that when an accident happens you probably won't have time to look for and put on your life jacket because doing so is like waiting until you are in the middle of an automobile crash to reach for your seat belt.

"While the casualty investigation will determine if passengers aboard the Taki Tooo were required to wear life jackets, the law requires that both commercial and recreational boat owners and operators carry life jackets or other personal flotation devices for everyone aboard their vessel. Recently implemented regulations require that all children aboard recreational vessels wear their life jackets. This new standard allows some flexibility in age to mesh with various state laws but generally calls for life jackets for those under the age of 13. Common sense says that teenagers ***(see next column)***

VADM Terry Cross (cont'd)

and adults should follow suit whenever they are aboard any type of small boat.

"In addition to life jackets, boat owners should ensure the safety of their boats by carrying safety equipment such as fire extinguishers, flares or other signaling devices, a VHF-marine radio, a first aid kit, and an emergency positioning indicator radio beacon. Boaters should tell someone where they are going and when they'll return before they leave the dock.

"Unfortunately, all the safety gear in the world won't help if the people in charge of the boat don't know what they're doing, so boaters should take advantage of the free safe boating classes offered by the Coast Guard Auxiliary and the U.S. Power Squadron.

"While investigations will determine the exact cause of the Taki Tooo's capsizing, and medical examiners will pinpoint the causes of death, the fact remains that none of those who perished was recovered wearing a life jacket, and half of the survivors were.

"The statistics are sobering -- eight of every 10 victims in fatal boating accidents are not wearing life jackets. Obviously, a life jacket can only save your life if you are wearing one."

Vice Adm. Terry M. Cross is commander of the U.S. Coast Guard's Pacific Area, headquartered in Alameda. You can see this article in the Mercury News at: http://www.bayarea.com/mld/mercurynews/news/opinion/6113949.htm

Editor's Note: We've heard of several examples of individuals in the Coast Guard and other organizations who were able to use the media interest in this terrible tragedy to tell the public about the importance of wearing life jackets. We salute **Master Chief Lars Ken**t, Officer in Charge of Station Tillamook Bay, and **LT William Seward**, CG HH-60 (helicopter) pilot out of Air Station Astoria, both of whom used media interviews by television networks CNN and NBC, respectively, to emphasize the point that it's wearing life jackets – not just having them – that saves lives. What a difference it might have made if everyone had actually been wearing a life jacket before that boat left the dock that day. Thanks to these two individuals and others like them, someone somewhere will!

[Editor's Note: The CG Public Affairs Office has sent public affairs guidance to its Public Affairs Officers (PAOs) around the country, asking them to target carbon monoxide for the Fourth of July holiday. Please feel free to use the information in this article or the attached "Talking Points" to bring this important issue to the boating public.]

What You Can't See… Can Harm You

By Captain Scott Evans
Chief, Office of Boating Safety
U.S. Coast Guard

Most boaters know that Carbon Monoxide (CO) is poisonous. They know CO can be present in their homes, so they install detectors. They know is present in a car's exhaust, so they don't run the engine in enclosed spaces like garages. Some even know it can collect in a boat's engine space, and other interior compartments.

But very few know that Carbon Monoxide can be present in dangerous concentrations outside a boat -- around exhaust outlets, under swim platforms, even in an open cabin under certain conditions. The results can be dangerous, even fatal.

The good news? CO poisoning is easily prevented through awareness -- and a few simple steps all boaters can take.

Carbon Monoxide is a colorless, odorless, tasteless, and highly toxic gas. It is produced when a carbon-based fuel -- such as gasoline, propane, charcoal, or oil -- burns. Sources on a boat include engines, generators, cooking ranges, and space and water heaters.

Carbon Monoxide enters the bloodstream through the lungs, blocking oxygen the body needs. Prolonged exposure to low concentrations -- or very brief exposure to high concentrations -- can kill. Early symptoms of CO poisoning include irritated eyes, headache, nausea, weakness, and dizziness. On the water, these symptoms are often confused with seasickness or intoxication, so those affected may not receive the medical attention they need.

CO is often emitted through *(see next column)*

What You Can't See…(Cont'd)

a boat's engine or generator exhaust outlets -- on a typical powerboat, toward the stern and at or slightly under the waterline. As a result, CO can accumulate almost anywhere in or around a boat. It can collect under swim platforms, around the stern, and inside canvas enclosures. It can build up from exhaust outlets blocked when boats "raft up" -- or drift to one boat from an adjacent vessel's exhaust. At slow or no-wake speeds, especially with a following wind, CO can be drawn into a cockpit by backdrafting -- the "station wagon" effect. And it can remain in and around a boat for some time after the engine or generator is shut off.

Certain trends are fueling growing concern about Carbon Monoxide poisoning on recreational boats. As boaters enjoy more ancillary equipment -- air conditioners, stereos, and televisions -- they run gas generators for longer periods of time, sometimes when swimmers are in the water near generator exhausts.

A dangerous fad called "teak surfing" consists of young swimmers holding onto the swim platform of a boat as the boat accelerates -- then letting go to "surf" the wake. Teak surfers cannot avoid the risk of inhaling dangerous levels of CO. This is an extremely risky activity because the boats' propulsion engines are in use during teak surfing. These engines produce a very high volume of exhaust gases, usually directed straight into the area behind the boat where the teak surfers are located.

New research is suggesting that deaths previously attributed to drowning may have in fact occurred when a boater or swimmer was already unconscious from CO poisoning. As much as 15% of drownings may be due to Carbon Monoxide from recreational boats.

One of the best-known victims of CO poisoning is legendary racecar driver Al Unser, Sr. In 1995 Unser was boating when his anchor line became entangled in the propeller. He dove under water several times trying to free the prop -- breathing in dangerous concentrations of CO every time he surfaced.

"I knew I was in trouble," Unser said, recalling that horrifying incident. "I don't know how I got out from underneath. I had to be helped out. I couldn't walk. I could barely crawl." After a lifetime of driving high-performance automobiles and working around gas engines, Unser was well aware ***(see next page***

What You Can't See…(Cont'd)

of the dangers of Carbon Monoxide -- but had never considered that CO could be a threat to a boater.

Others have not been as lucky as Al Unser, Sr. A teenage girl died after washing her hair in the warm water flowing overboard from a generator exhaust outlet. Two young children were overcome while swimming in the cavity under a swim platform. A young woman suffers from permanent brain damage after "teak surfing." These stories are tragic -- because all of these deaths and injuries could have been prevented through simple awareness of the problem.

The U.S. Coast Guard Office of Boating Safety offers these safety tips to help boaters prevent CO poisoning.

Learn where engine and generator exhaust ports are located on your boat. Place a warning sticker, and keep swimmers clear of those areas. Never run the engine or generator when people are in the water near the boat.

Maintain fresh air circulation throughout the boat at all times. Although CO itself is odorless, remember that CO is present in all exhaust gases. Take immediate action if exhaust fumes are detected on the boat.

Take care when "rafting up" or in other situations where air circulation around exhaust ports may be restricted, and remember CO entering your boat from another boat is as dangerous as CO generated by your own engines.

Educate your passengers about Carbon Monoxide as part of your pre-trip safety briefing.

Treat symptoms of seasickness as possible CO poisoning. Get the victim into fresh air immediately, and seek medical attention unless it is certain that CO is not the cause.

Install and maintain CO alarms inside your boat. NEVER ignore any alarm. Replace batteries as recommended by the alarm manufacturer.

Get a free Vessel Safety Check every year. These bow-to-stern examinations help identify safety problems and violations before they become emergencies.

Boating is an enjoyable, relaxing, *(see next column)*

What You Can't See…(Cont'd)

and safe activity -- and the U.S. Coast Guard wants you to enjoy your time on the water. Learn the facts and remember -- when it comes to Carbon Monoxide -- what you can't see can harm you. ***You're In Command. Boat Safely.***

For more information on ways to boating safely, call the U.S. Coast Guard Infoline at 1-800-368-5647 or visit www.uscgboating.org. You're In Command. Boat Safely.

Talking Points on Carbon Monoxide

- Carbon Monoxide (CO) can harm and even kill you whether you're inside or outside your boat. The gas enters the bloodstream through the lungs, blocking oxygen the body needs. You can't see, smell, or taste CO. Both prolonged exposure to low concentrations and very short exposure (1-2 breaths) to high concentrations can kill.
- Recreational boating fatalities and injuries due to Carbon Monoxide may be a much greater problem than previously believed. **Many deaths classified as drownings may have occurred when a boater or swimmer was already unconscious from CO poisoning**. Investigators believe that **as much as 15 percent of all reported drownings nationwide** may be related to Carbon Monoxide from recreational boats – perhaps even more.
- The Coast Guard is asking recreational boaters to take special care during the busy July 4th holiday weekend, and any time they are on the water.
- Boaters should be aware that boat engines and generators produce Carbon Monoxide (CO) – a colorless, odorless, tasteless but highly toxic gas.
- **Symptoms of CO poisoning are similar to seasickness or alcohol intoxication**. Possible symptoms include: irritated eyes, headache, nausea, weakness, and dizziness.
- Under certain conditions, Carbon Monoxide can accumulate around exhaust vents, under swim platforms, in the cabin, or even in open air.
- Conditions and behaviors on the July 4 weekend – including rafting-up, slow speed operation in crowded waters, and activities like "teak surfing" increase the risk of CO poisoning.

NSBC Recognizes Triton Boats

Virgil Chambers, along with NSBC Vice Chair Ed Carter, BLA Tennessee, and legendary angler Ray Scott, recently awarded Earl Bentz, President of Triton Boats, a special recognition award for the company's decision to equip its 2004 line of Triton bass boats with a sleek hidden self-rescue ladder. The ladder will carry NSBC's logo and state that it was awarded a lifesaving innovation award from the Council.

The newly designed ladder, which is hidden from view until the angler releases a lock enabling the ladder to telescope from the stern, is compatible with the sleekest of bass boat designs. The importance of this innovation is the availability of an angler who has fallen overboard to re-board the boat with no outside assistance.

Approximately 700 people die each year in boating accidents in the U.S. Over half of these involve anglers who unexpectedly end up in the water. "Often it is difficult to reboard the craft from deep water with wet clothes, especially if the water is cold. Even when wearing a life jacket, cold water can prove to be fatal if a person does not get out quickly. This 'always ready' ladder should save lives due to its accessibility, and ease of use," said Chambers. "Triton Boats will save the lives of anglers through use of this product."

In accepting the NSBC Special Life Saving Award for Innovation, Bentz said, "We manufacture boats for the serious bass fishing tournament professional as well as the weekend angler. We have always considered comfort, style, performance and safety. This ladder is just a continuation of that commitment to our consumer. We also believe this feature will give our bass boats greater flexibility to be used as a family craft for in-water sports like swimming, water skiing and diving."

Triton President Bentz acknowledged the contribution of professional angler Ray Scott, Founder of B.A.S.S. (Bass Anglers Sportsmen Society) in the production of this new design. Mr. Scott, a member of the National Safe Boating Council Hall of Fame, has been credited with a number of boating safety innovations, including the engine cut-off switch. He is also credited with requiring participants in B.A.S.S. tournaments to wear life jackets, setting a favorable example to anglers world wide.

Raising BUI Awareness: Goggles Can Help Boaters Watch Their BACs

Sometimes, people just have to experience something first hand before they really understand the danger. But, allowing boaters or would-be boaters to imbibe in order to prove the point that drinking and boating don't mix is probably not the best solution!

Several USACE projects have used programs that utilize specially designed goggles that come in different "strengths" to simulate varying degrees of intoxication to the wearer. The effect is immediate; while the wearer can see fairly clearly through the goggles, the distortion in the lenses causes confusing signals to be sent to the brain. The wearer feels unsteady, and reaction time doing even simple tasks slows significantly.

Research shows that those who learn from hands-on experience retain two to four times more than those who learn from just listening or listening and seeing. Said Ed Evans, USACE, "I can't tell you how popular and effective these are as hands-on training tools when [the rangers] go to visit schools. Yes, they are fun to put on and weave around, but coupled with the ranger's talk, they make a highly effective point about not being able to control what happens to you with excess alcohol."

The goggles are great for raising BUI awareness at schools, boat shows, open houses, safety stand-downs, guest presentations, in classroom training, and other venues. When people experience impairment first-hand while trying to do a simple task, the lesson sticks.

Several brands of these products are available online. Check out these websites for simulator goggles and other BUI awareness products: www.fatalvision.com and www.drunkbusters.com. Another brand we've heard of is DUEyes.

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